



Garden of Eden: A Faith-based Program to Prevent Obesity Among Urban African Americans in Saint Louis, Missouri

Issue

Obesity is one of America's most significant public health problems. Recent studies indicate that approximately 23% of all Americans are obese and the rates of obesity are even higher among some minority groups. African Americans have one of the highest rates of obesity, currently estimated at approximately 30%. Obesity is associated with a variety of diseases including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and several forms of cancer. Poor nutrition and physical inactivity are key risk factors in developing obesity and related diseases.

"We're seeing a number of serious health effects resulting from overweight and obesity. If we continue on this same path, the results will be devastating to both the health of the nation and to our healthcare system."

Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Response

In Saint Louis, Missouri a participatory community- and faith-based project is underway to prevent obesity among urban African Americans. The Garden of Eden program brings together expertise from local community members, business leaders, faith communities, academicians, and state and local minority health agencies. Together, the partners will develop program activities designed to prevent obesity by helping individuals change lifestyle behaviors and by fostering community infrastructure that supports healthful choices.

The Garden of Eden program will incorporate the use of nutrition and fitness advocates from urban African American communities to engage other community members in activities geared toward health improvement. Examples of program activities include: developing a community-run grocery store; increasing knowledge and skills regarding nutrition and physical activity; and developing a community dialogue regarding the association between community infrastructure and personal behavior.

The specific aims of the project are numerous and include the following:

- Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables;
- Decrease consumption of dietary fat;
- Increase physical activity; and
- Increase knowledge and skills required to lead more healthful lives.

This project will provide valuable information about the effectiveness of a participatory community- and faith-based program to address behavioral and environmental determinants of obesity.

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More Information

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For more information about CDC's Community-based Participatory Prevention Research, please contact the Office of Public Health Research, CDC, 1600 Clifton Rd., MS D-72
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